Perhaps the most surprising thing about this book is that it was published as part of Wiley-Blackwell’s “Critical Introductions to Geography” series. This is the series that began with Don Mitchell’s *Cultural Geography* and Paul Robbins’ *Political Ecology* and has now grown to five titles (with another five forthcoming). As the book’s front matter notes, “Critical Introductions to Geography is a series of textbooks for undergraduate courses covering the key geographical subdisciplines and providing broad and introductory treatment with a critical edge. They are designed for the North American and international market and take a lively and engaging approach with a distinct geographical voice that distinguishes them from more traditional and out-date texts” (p. ii). Is communication geography really a “key subdiscipline?” Apparently Paul Adams thinks so, and evidently either he or series editor John Paul Jones were able to convince Wiley-Blackwell as much too. And yet I wonder how many universities in “the North American and international market” have undergraduate classes in communication geography, or even dedicated communication units within broader human geography courses. The AAG’s Communication Geography Specialty Group was chartered only in 2003 and there is no equivalent research group in the IBG. You are reading the only journal devoted to the topic. As Adams himself notes, geographers are woefully ignorant of some of the central debates that permeate the field of communication studies.

Perhaps in response to this daunting academic landscape, Adams makes space for communications geography by defining communications and media in the broadest
possible sense. Alongside sections on predictable topics such as communications technology, internet governance, semiotics, virtuality, media theories, and linguistics, readers of Geographies of Media and Communication will find sections on topics such as time-geography, structuration theory, actor-network theory, landscape analysis, boundary-crossing, and the phenomenology of place. It almost seems as though Adams is including the whole of cultural geography within his “geographies of media and communication.” Indeed, Adams acknowledges this in his concluding chapter: “What is generally referred to as the ‘cultural turn’ in human geography...[should] be renamed the communicational turn – because of the vague and frequently biased nature of the term ‘culture’ and also because communication is at the heart of every major aspect of the cultural turn” (p.214). With this sentence, which is is accompanied by citations to Mitchell’s “There’s no such thing as culture” article (Mitchell 1995) and, his Critical Introductions book (Mitchell 2000), Adams suggests not only that communications geography is a “key subdiscipline” but also that it encompasses everything previously called “cultural geography.” I’m not sure if Adams is implying that Mitchell’s book in the same series is unnecessary, or merely that it is naïve, but, either way, I am left trying to imagine the Wiley-Blackwell editor reading this passage and wondering if it is healthy to foster such contests among one’s authors.

Adams’ rhetorical move, besides possibly cannibalizing sales from another volume in the same series, raises the question of whether calling everything “communication” is an improvement over calling everything “culture.” For Mitchell, the problem with “culture” is that it assigns superorganic presence and permanence to something that in fact is always in process and that is continually being contested. Could calling everything “communication” do the same thing? Adams would say no: “Communication” is an improvement over “culture” because “communication” is always a process, as it involves the construction of connections among individuals and societies. Furthermore, it is always geographical. Specifically, Adams defines four angles (or sets of relations) that constitute the geography of communications: “Media in space,” under which one studies the geographic layout of communication networks; “spaces in media,” under which one analyzes the social spaces that are created through media connections; “places in media,” which revolves around the various ways that places receive their meanings through media and communicative interactions; and “media in place,” which covers the ways in which media are used to define what is in and out of place.

Following the construction of this typology, Adams avoids the predictable tack of devoting a section of his book to each angle. Adams acknowledges that the division (or, as he calls it, the “quadrant diagram”) is simply a heuristic device and that many issues in the geography of communication fail to fit into any single perspective. Thus, while he associates five of the chapters that follow with specific perspectives, he identifies another three as lying on the border between two perspectives and a further five chapters as encompassing elements of all four perspectives. In the process, the neat typology spelled
out in the introductory chapter gets lost. This may frustrate some readers, particularly
students who are looking to make sense of this emergent subdiscipline by dividing it
into four legibly bounded sub-subdisciplines. On the other hand, Adams' willingness to
break away from simplistic typologies, even when they are of his own doing, is refreshing
for the reader who has put down his or her highlighting marker and who has chosen to
join Adams in thinking through the implications of seeing geography through the lens
of communication.

This tension between defining the sub-subdisciplines of communication
geography and then blurring the lines between them points to another tension in the
book and, indeed, one that is endemic to the Critical Introductions series. As was noted
at the beginning of this review, these books are designed both to introduce a subfield
to undergraduates and to have a “critical edge” that advances particular arguments.
One book can achieve both goals, but the balance is difficult to achieve, and I am not
sure that Adams fully succeeds here. Significant sections of the book read like “who’s
who’s” of human geography, quickly referring to the work of previous scholars on, say,
landscape interpretation and then making the argument that, although these scholars
would never have described themselves this way, they were in fact examining processes
of communication. The technique serves Adams well as he reaches out to established
geographers among his readership, convincing them of the subdiscipline’s breadth
(the seasoned geographer who is curious about this new thing called “communication
geography” might read this book and remark: “Gee; I never thought of Denis Cosgrove
as a communication geographer, but I guess that is what he was writing about, even if
he would not have classified himself as such; hey, then maybe I’m a communication
geographer too”). But the rapid survey through the pantheon of human geographers
may leave in the dust the undergraduate who is seeking an introduction to geographies
of media and communication rather than illustrations of the role of communication in
so many aspects (and subdisciplines) of geography.

Notwithstanding the question of whether the world is ready for an undergraduate
textbook on media and communications geography, Adams demonstrates that numerous
geographers from within and outside the subdiscipline are engaging questions that, for
Adams at least, fundamentally concern communications. The book is tremendously
valuable for making this argument. Even if Adams perhaps overstates his case in
proclaiming the centrality of communications in geography, he does put communications
geography “on the map.” As Adams writes, when discussing the social implications
of the printing press, “Printing mobilizes the word in space-time by permitting it to
reach a wider audience, spread out among many countries and potentially over many
centuries. This mobilization in turn frees up structures of social power and authority,
beliefs, rules, and values...This new space of the audience corresponds to a new type
of time and a new dynamic of social power” (p.30). In other words, books engage ideas
and spread them, and this leads to further engagement with ideas. Every book, in this
sense, begins a process and, as Adams would surely note, that process itself occurs in, and transforms, space. *Geographies of Media and Communication* thus is an important beginning, and communication geographers will benefit greatly from taking up Adams’ lead and continuing the conversation.

**References**